

# **TELECOMMUTING WORK OPTION**

**INFORMATION  
GUIDELINES AND MODEL POLICY**

**Prepared by:**

**THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
TELECOMMUTING ADVISORY GROUP  
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"... innovations don't require genius,  
just a willingness to question the way things have always been done."

...Robert J. Kriegel with Louis Patler  
from ... *If It Ain't Broke . . . Break It!*

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## **TELECOMMUTING WORK OPTION GENERAL INFORMATION**

It is the policy of the State of California to encourage the use of telecommuting as a management work option. AB 2963, Statutes of 1990 (Klehs), adding Sections 14200-14203 to the *California Government Code*, authorized state agencies, boards, and commissions to establish telecommuting programs as an element of transportation management programs. In 1989 and 1991, two Governor's Executive orders directed state wide telecommuting, both generally and in response to specific incidents.

The telecommuting work option was the subject of an extensive two year pilot. Participating agencies conducted the programs under a wide variety of conditions. The results of the pilot showed significant improvements in employee effectiveness and morale and significant reductions in transportation system use. The policies, guidelines, and activities described in these guidelines document the benefits to realize and the steps necessary to implement and manage a successful telecommuting program.

These policies, guidelines, and activities were developed so that the lessons of the pilot would be put to use. While telecommuting has many benefits, there are potential problems that can be mitigated or avoided by careful planning and design of an agency's telecommuting program. Successful telecommuting requires thorough orientation, support of management, a controlled prototype, careful selection of managers/supervisors and telecommuters, focused training for participants and their peers, monitoring and evaluation. Telecommuting, implemented and run properly, is an effective management work option. However there are a number of common pitfalls that must be avoided if a telecommuting program is to be successful. This document, therefore, is a guide for what to do and what not to do when implementing and managing a telecommuting program.

### **Definition**

Telecommuting is working one or more days each work week from home or from an office near home instead of commuting to a distant work place.

The policies described herein apply to the following forms of telecommuting.

1. Home-based -- working in a space specifically set aside as an office in an employee's residence.
2. Telecenter-based -- working from an office near the employee's home. The building is owned or leased by one or more agencies. Telecenter employees work there primarily because it is close to their home, not necessarily because they belong to the same work unit.

## **Responsibilities**

Responsibility for the management of the State's telecommuting program is divided between the Telecommuting Unit in Department of General Services and the participating Departments, Boards and Commissions of the State of California, referred to herein as agencies. The Department of General Services provides services that meet the common needs of all agencies, ensuring that unnecessary fragmentation is avoided and economies of scale are achieved.

Responsibilities of the Department of General Services are derived from Government Code sections 14200-14203 and other applicable statutes and regulations.

### **Department of General Services**

The Department of General Services (the Department of General Services) has responsibility for providing technical assistance to telecommuting programs for Departments, Boards, and Commissions of the State of California. While authority to establish a specific telecommuting program within an agency is delegated to the Director of each agency, telecommuting programs should be implemented following the guidelines established herein documented.

The following activities are the responsibility of the Department of General Services.

*Communication and Coordination.* The Department of General Services is the primary point of contact for the public, private sector employers, state agencies and state employees for information regarding the State's telecommuting program. Public contacts that are made with individual agencies may also be referred to the Department of General Services.

The Department of General Services will coordinate with the Office of Traffic Improvement, Department of Transportation (Caltrans), with private and local governmental employers. Caltrans, along with other agencies with program responsibility, will advocate and encourage joint efforts designed to increase the total amount of telecommuting in order to achieve the goals and benefits described below.

The Department of General Services will coordinate and facilitate the interagency exchange of information regarding the successes and problems encountered with the State's telecommuting program, and will sponsor a Telecommuting Advisory Group for this purpose. In this capacity the Department of General Services will provide orientation and assistance to agency telecommuting and employee transportation coordinators.

*Legislation.* The Department of General Services and the Telecommuting Advisory Group will review pending legislation for its impact on the State's telecommuting program.

*Policy, Procedures and Guidelines.* The Department of General Services, with advice from the Telecommuting Advisory Group, is responsible for developing and updating policies, procedures and guidelines to assist agencies in the planning and implementation of telecommuting programs.

*Telecenters.* The Department of General Services is the lead agency for requesting the siting of telecenters for state agencies. The Department of General Services will develop procedures to track the needs of agencies, identify potential office locations, and will work with involved agencies to facilitate the establishment of telecenters.

*Prototype Programs.* Agencies without experience operating telecommuting programs are strongly encouraged to implement a controlled prototype program prior to official adoption of a telecommuting work option within each agency. Experience has demonstrated that there are many potential pitfalls for telecommuting programs. The prototype is designed to identify and correct potential problem areas and thus ensure successful implementation of telecommuting in an agency. The Department of General Services will assist agencies in designing, implementing, and evaluating their prototype programs.

*Program Evaluation.* Agencies participating in the State's telecommuting program should periodically evaluate the telecommuting programs. The Department of General Services will establish recommended criteria for the content and frequency of evaluations and will review agency evaluation reports and recommend modifications to an agency's program if requested.

## **Participating Agencies**

Each agency participating in the State's telecommuting program is responsible for establishing the specific program available within its agency. Because agency programs differ, their telecommuting programs will also differ. The nature of the services provided to the public and others, the geographic dispersion of the agency, and the decentralization of management of the agency will all affect the form of the program. Therefore, telecommuting must be tailored to the particular environment in which it will operate.

*Agency Telecommuting Policy.* Each agency participating in the telecommuting program will formally adopt a telecommuting policy which shall be based on the model policy contained in this manual. Those agencies that have ongoing, but

informal, telecommuting programs are encouraged to formalize those programs through adoption of a telecommuting policy.

*Management and Operations.* Each participating agency is responsible for managing and operating its own telecommuting program. The generally low additional costs to establish and maintain a telecommuting program will be borne by the participating agency.

*Agency Coordinator.* An agency telecommuting coordinator must be assigned. This individual will oversee the telecommuting program including compliance with policies, procedures, and guidelines described in this manual. The coordinator will be the primary contact with the Department of General Services and will represent the agency on the Telecommuting Advisory Group. The coordinator will represent the management of the agency with respect to telecommuting with employees, other agencies and the public. The coordinator should be at a high enough level within the organization to have access to and the confidence of top management of the agency. An agency that is large or widely dispersed may wish to assign additional coordinators. A motivated, enthusiastic coordinator is highly desirable.

## **Benefits and Costs**

The rationale for the telecommuting work option rests with benefits being greater than the costs to plan and operate a program. The three benefit categories are societal, management, and personal.

### **Societal Benefits**

Societal benefits relate to programs administered and regulated by State government. These include the following.

- Telecommuting reduces commute trips and traffic congestion.
- Fewer commute trips reduce air pollution and conserve transportation fuels (energy conservation) which, in turn, reduce health costs related to air pollution.
- Employment opportunities for the disabled and mobility restricted are improved with the telecommuting option.
- Telecommute work and public services can continue uninterrupted during natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and fires, which may prevent routine access to the conventional office site.

- Telecommuting can reduce the problems associated with elder care and "latch-key" children.

## **Management**

Benefits of telecommuting from the perspective of agency management include the following:

- Improvements in employee effectiveness usually occur with telecommuting work arrangements.
- Office space, parking facilities and employer-subsidized transportation costs can be reduced, and in-office resources can be shared.
- Communications often improve between the manager / supervisor and the employee.
- Skilled employees are retained and employee turnover rates are reduced together with costs associated with recruitment, training and downtime during the training and replacement periods.
- Absenteeism and sick leave declines as a result of telecommuting.
- Trained employees with health problems can be accommodated to reduce their burden of getting to work, while they are still able and want to work.
- The benefits of management by results carry over to other parts of the agency.

## **Personal**

Employees also derive personal benefits from telecommuting. These are often the basis for the improved effectiveness seen among many telecommuters.

- Improvements are realized in managing work and discretionary time. There is increased flexibility to coordinate work schedules with personal and family priorities.
- Work can be performed when the employee is at peak performance time to match metabolism with the work.
- The telecommuter feels more in control of his/her life.

- Costs for transportation, food and clothing are reduced as a consequence of telecommuting.
- Communications with the supervisor about the job, its tasks and expected results are improved.

### **Costs**

The types of costs to plan and operate a telecommuting program are summarized below. The costs and benefits of telecommuting were evaluated in 1990 following a two-year multi-agency pilot. That evaluation concluded that telecommuting was a cost-beneficial program and should be expanded. Categories of costs include the following:

- Staff costs for agency telecommuting program coordinators and technical assistance by the Department of General Services.
- Equipment and communications costs for computers and telephone service.
- Costs for telecenters, including management, rent and utilities.

# **GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING A TELECOMMUTING PROGRAM**

## **Planning**

While telecommuting has many benefits, there are also potential problems that can be mitigated by careful planning and design of an agency's telecommuting program. Successful telecommuting requires thorough orientation, support of top management, a controlled pilot, careful selection of managers/supervisors and telecommuters, focused training for participants and their peers, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

This section of the Guidelines (Planning) identifies the major factors that an agency must consider prior to making a commitment to establish a telecommuting program. Section II (Implementation) outlines the steps that should be followed once a decision to proceed is made.

## **Telecommuting Options**

There are several commonly used forms of telecommuting which have somewhat different characteristics. One or more types of telecommuting may be suitable for your agency.

*Home-based telecommuting* is working in a space specifically set aside as an office in an employee's residence.

A *telecenter* is an office near the employees' homes to which the employees regularly report for work. It is owned or leased by one or more organizations. It looks like any other office building, with individual offices, desks, computers, telephones and conference rooms. Telecenter employees work there because they live close to the facility. Telecenters are similar to field offices, but are located to reduce commuting. The positive attributes of a Telecenter versus telecommuting from home are that shared resources usually allow for more access to office machines such as copiers and quality printers, better or faster computer access through high speed dedicated lines, and provide the social stimulus that is absent for the lone telecommuter. They also allow for on-site supervision when the nature of the work and/or security considerations make work at home not feasible.

*Mixed-use telecommuting* includes the use of a combination of the main or central office, telecenters and home offices.

Home office telecommuting is based on a volunteer arrangement mutually agreed upon by the supervisor or manager and the telecommuter. Telecenter telecommuting need not be on a volunteer basis.

### **Secure Management and Labor Support**

Top-down support is vital. Any innovative program requires the support of senior management. In addition, an active champion is usually essential to getting a program off the ground.

Agency management should involve their Labor Relations office in the planning and development stages of the program to ensure that the program will not be in conflict with the provisions of collective bargaining agreements. Prior to implementing a telecommuting program, the Labor Relations Division of the Department of Personnel Administration should be notified. Additionally, employee unions should be given the opportunity to discuss the proposed program and its impact on unit employees.

### **Plan for Management by Objectives / Results**

Telecommuting is a product of the Information Age. The very nature of "telecommutable" jobs is tied to the manipulation of information. Managing the work of information workers is very different from managing production units. The products are often intangible, production standards are difficult to develop, and assessment of quality is often subjective in the short term.

Managers of information workers, telecommuters or not, must rely on techniques other than the observation of activity that has been a mainstay of managers for many years.

Planning for a successful telecommuting program must address the questions of managers that will inevitably arise -- how do I know the telecommuters are "really" working? How do I know whether the work they are doing is acceptable?

The most successful philosophy for managing telecommuters is that of management by end result. The elements that should be built into this style of management are project schedules and key milestones, regular status reporting, peer and/or project team quality reviews, team participation in decision making, trust, and telecommuter agreements. Part of the training for prospective managers of telecommuters should include a section on the practical implementation of these ideas.



## Cost Factors

For home telecommuters the up-front costs can be as low as \$0, where the only equipment needed is a telephone and the existing home phone is used. More commonly, the telecommuter will need access to a variety of equipment and/or will use the telephone extensively on telecommuting days.

The following types of up-front and ongoing expenses may be incurred by the agency. Those noted with an asterisk are commonly already incurred by an agency; thus, *where* the costs are incurred becomes the only difference; further, these expenses do not necessarily represent additional costs to an agency.

- Long distance charges \*
- Installation and monthly charges for a second telephone line
- Telephone usage charges (other than long distance) \*
- Computer or typewriter assigned to the employee
- Computer software \*
- Specialized furniture
- Modem and possible additional computer usage charges
- Modifications to the central computer to allow telecommuters to dial in
- Answering machine or voice mail \*
- Fax machine
- Equipment maintenance and repair charges \*
- Replacement of damaged or lost equipment \*

The costs to establish and maintain a telecenter-based are similar to those for any field office: remodeling, rent, telecommunications lines and equipment, utilities, computer equipment, photocopier and other office machines, furniture, and so forth.

## Selection Criteria

Before a manager can start to consider a telecommuting request seriously, the manager and worker must examine the job requirements carefully. While some jobs might be performed almost 100% off site, most jobs require a certain amount of time at the main office. There are three basic reasons for this. First, few jobs can be performed totally off site without access to costly resources. Second, few workers want to work at home five days per week. Finally, most workers need time in the office to attend meetings, project reviews, etc., and to service customers. Access to shared resources and the social contact of the office are major differences between full-time home based telecommuting and satellite telecommuting.

A major component of a "telecommutable" job is processing of information. Does a worker's job have to do with the researching, processing, and dispensing of

information? If indeed a job has a large information component to it, the chances are that a certain percentage of the job can be done off site. Obviously, jobs that require the worker to perform a hands-on service for others, such as law enforcement, correctional supervision, fire fighting, mail room service, supplies delivery, reproduction/printing, patient care, etc., are not amenable to telecommuting. However, even those jobs often involve some tasks, such as report writing, which can be done off-site.

After deciding that a certain job has telecommuting possibilities, other criteria need to be explored.

- **Knowledge Requirements:** does the telecommuter have all the knowledge needed to work at home, or will s(he) need supervision or input from others that is only available at the office?

- **Public/Agency Contact Requirements:** what percentage of the job is devoted to "face to face" contact with other agencies, the public or internal agency staff? Can this contact be revamped to allow for communications via phone, or can such contact be limited to non-telecommuting days?

- **Reference Materials Requirements:** what percentage of the job is predicated on the use of resources located in the main office? Can these resources be easily removed and taken home for a day or two? Are these resources available through other means such as a computer-accessible library service?
- **Special Equipment Requirements:** what percentage of the job relies upon access to photocopiers, fax machines, or other specialized equipment? Can access needs be grouped for non-telecommuting days?
- **Travel Requirements:** does the job involve field work? Can trips begin or end at the home office or telecenter rather than the main office? Can paperwork be done at home or telecenter?
- **Information Security Requirements:** what percentage of the job uses secured or classified information, and how can the integrity of that secured information be upheld if data is taken off site?
- **Task Scheduling Requirements:** can tasks which can be completed at home be grouped and scheduled for telecommuting days?

The agency's objective is to identify the types of jobs suitable for telecommuting.

## **Employee / Supervisor Selection**

Once job tasks suitable for telecommuting have been identified, prospective telecommuters and their managers must be screened for suitability for this work option. Each agency must establish a selection process for their telecommuting program.

It is crucial to select employees who are motivated and self-directed. It is equally crucial to have managers with appropriate management skills, or the willingness to learn to fully utilize the telecommuting work mode. A manager who is comfortable managing for results will generally be a successful telecommuter manager. Furthermore, a good working relationship and good flow of communications between the manager and prospective telecommuter is essential. The following areas should be examined when considering potential telecommuters.

*Screening Factors...* Employees who are successful telecommuters generally have a number of work-related characteristics in common, including such qualities as:

- A history of reliable and responsible discharge of work duties
- Full understanding of the operations of his/her agency
- The trust of his/her manager
- An ability to establish priorities and manage his/her own time
- A conscientious pursuit of high-quality work production

Additional assistance in defining specific screening factors for an agency is available from the Department of General Services

*Disabled Employees...* Telecommuting may be an option for people who find it difficult to commute to work, wish to continue working through a convalescence period, or are considered unemployable because they cannot leave their home, but are able to perform work independent of location. In most cases these employees should meet the telecommuting screening criteria that an agency applies to its telecommuters. Telecommuting schedules should be established to balance management needs for face-to-face meetings with reasonable accommodation for the employee's disability.

*Equitable Distribution of Workload...* It is important that allowing some staff to telecommute not put a burden on staff remaining in the office. Not only should an equitable distribution of workload be maintained, but methods should be instituted to ensure that office employees do not have to handle telecommuters' work. For example, answering a co-worker's phone can become a chore and annoyance for the Central Office employee. This is easily overcome by having the telecommuter's phone calls forwarded to his/her home office phone, using voice mail, or installing

an answering machine on the office phone which the telecommuter can access from his/her home office phone. Care should also be taken to ensure that telecommuters continue to have access to needed office support.

*Employee Home Office...* The telecommuter and his/her family must ensure that the home office is just that, a space set aside for the employee to work. Family responsibilities must be arranged so as not to interfere with work time at home. The home should be a safe place to work. A plan should be given to the employee on how to safely set up a home office. The home should be free of hazardous materials; wiring and gas lines should be up to the local building codes; and the structure should be safe (stairs etc.). The telecommuter should sign a certificate, much like that used for private cars on State business, that proclaims the home safe for telecommuting. In some cases, the manager may wish to make an appointment with the telecommuter to verify that the home office meets these requirements.

### **New Telecommuters and New Supervisors**

To facilitate the smooth transition for new telecommuters and new supervisors of telecommuters, an ongoing training program should be established by each participating agency. Training is currently being provided through the State Training Center, and plans are being developed to expand training availability state wide . An agency may wish to use the state-sponsored training program, or to contract with a private-sector training consultant approved by the Department of General Services. A "Train the Trainers" program is also being developed to provide agency training coordinators with credentials to train telecommuters and supervisors. Training should include the topics discussed earlier under Program Implementation.

### **Position Classification**

Telecommuting merely is a change in the location where work is performed. Therefore, new classes or revisions to existing classes should not be necessary to implement or maintain a telecommuting program. The Department of Personnel Administration will consider changing the classification plan only when the existing classification plan no longer adequately describes the work performed. This typically occurs when the nature of the work performed changes; new knowledge, skills or abilities are required; or distinct differences in the job requirements develop between telecommuting and non-telecommuting responsibilities.

### **Technology Needs**

*Equipment...* While some telecommuters may do their required work at home or in the office with pen and paper, others will require a computer, computer with modem, or dedicated terminal to communicate with people and access the information needed to do their jobs. It is essential that the equipment used at home be compatible with central office equipment. Purchase of a lap-top computer should be considered. A lap-top eliminates the need to buy expensive computer furniture in which to house a regular size personal computer, allows greater flexibility, and makes it more convenient for the telecommuter to use a single piece of equipment both at home and in the office. Typewriters, copiers, or fax machines may occasionally also be necessary.

An employees' equipment may be used at the option of the employee.

*Telecommunications...* The minimum requirement is a telephone so that the telecommuter may stay in contact with the office. Voice communications may be handled through the telecommuter's residential phone, if call volume is not heavy. If extensive voice communications are necessary for the tasks performed at home, a second line should be installed. The Telecommunications Division of General Services and the local telephone company can assist in determining whether a regular business line, a State-provided line, or some other type of line is best suited for each situation.

Data communications may also be handled through the telecommuter's home phone if volume is light. If extensive data communications are necessary, a second line should be installed. The above options apply to data communication needs as well. An additional option for data is a dedicated line. The telecommuter's agency should pay for the installation and monthly charges if a second telephone line is required.

The need to transfer incoming calls to the regular office to the telecommuter must also be considered. Options such as call forwarding on the office line or voice mail should be evaluated.

If the agency has an office automation network or other centralized computer services, arrangements should be made so that the telecommuter can access his/her electronic mail and transfer files. It is important that the customer support unit of the agency's data processing division be contacted early in the planning for telecommuting. The customer support unit will be able to suggest cost/effective methods for communicating that provide protection against unauthorized access. It is also important that the customer support unit staff be fully trained in outside access of the central systems so that they can be a technical resource for telecommuters beginning the first day of the program.

## **Information Security**

Telecommuting is a powerful tool for increasing management and employee effectiveness and reducing traffic congestion. If in some cases the information security risks increase slightly in a telecommute environment, the benefits may be worth the risks. There are steps that can minimize such risks. There are also standard information security activities that have particular relevance to telecommuting. During the investigation of telecommuting, the agency should review its information security practices. Those practices and policies should be updated and tailored to a telecommuting environment prior to the start of the telecommuting pilot.

## **Employee Reimbursement Procedures**

Each agency must make arrangements with agency accounting staff and the State Controllers Office to pay for business expenses incurred by the telecommuters. The Travel Expense Claim can be used for most expenses, but it is inappropriate for others. Employees should retain copies of all bills as the basis for requesting reimbursement. Advance planning in this area is necessary, and the telecommuting pilot should be used to work out the operational details. Each agency will need to plan to pay the following types of recurring expenses:

- Charges for business related telephone calls and services
- Supplies

The following types of expenses will not be paid by the State:

- Usage fees for privately owned computers
  - Utility costs associated with the use of the computer or occupation of the home
- Travel to the central office if the telecommute office becomes the primary work place.

Responsibility for the maintenance of the telecommuter's home equipment should be discussed and clearly defined prior to the start of telecommuting. Maintenance responsibility for personal equipment normally remains with the employee.

If provided for in their collective bargaining agreements, employees will remain eligible to receive commute subsidies as long as they continue to meet any specified criteria for the subsidy.

## **Pitfalls to Avoid**

Experience has identified many of the common pitfalls and traps that new telecommuters and their colleagues may encounter. Fortunately, solutions and ways to avoid the situations have been developed. Much of the training for telecommuters and their managers is oriented to how to get started correctly and deal with problem situations as they arise. The following are examples of some of the common pitfalls and traps to avoid.

- Managers forget to consider telecommuters' schedules and plan important meetings during scheduled telecommute days.
- Co-workers don't know when telecommuters will be in the office. There is a general sense that the telecommuter is "never around". There is a reluctance to call telecommuters at home on their telecommute days.
- Managers and telecommuters do not have clear, agreed-to expectations of the work that will be accomplished.
- Co-workers are not able to get in touch with (and are sometimes actively discouraged from contacting) a telecommuter. Clerical staff are unclear on how or when to contact a telecommute
- Telecommuters are reluctant to leave the phone on their telecommute days, even to use the rest room or take a break, because someone who called might think they are not working.
- Telecommuters run into technical problems with their computers and no one is available to assist them.
- Telecommuting is joked about as "goofing off". Telecommute days are referred to by co-workers as "days off".

## **Telecommuting Prototype**

A telecommuting program prototype will benefit the agency, potential telecommuters, their managers, and their co-workers by establishing a solid base of experience on which to build. The purpose of the prototype is to identify what does and does not work for that agency prior to a larger scale implementation of the telecommuting work option. The prototype should encompass a broad cross section of job classifications. The prototype should include units where there are multiple telecommuters to assess the impact on the unit. The prototype should be large

enough to be generalizable for the agency as a whole. It is important to also assess the satisfaction and effectiveness of staff who do not telecommute, as successful telecommuting is a team effort.

Prototypes typically last one year with six months recommended as a minimum. During this time, regular assessments and evaluations should be conducted, both by surveys and informal meetings of telecommuters, managers and non-telecommuting co-workers. At the end of the prototype, the agency will have a strong sense of how appropriate telecommuting is for that agency and its staff.

Before launching a telecommuting prototype, temporary operational procedures and prototype policies should be adopted. These should be based on the model policy contained in this manual.

### **Temporary Telecommuting**

Each agency should discuss and establish criteria for authorizing temporary telecommuting to handle special needs. Some of the situations where temporary telecommuting works well are the following:

- During the convalescence of an injury or illness,
- While an employee's child or spouse is recovering from an illness or injury and needs someone available at home,
- During the last few months or weeks of pregnancy, if regular maternity leave is not desired,
- When the trip to work is blocked by major construction, storms, or the effects of natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes (this works best when there is a regular program in place), or
- When the work office itself is not usable due to planned events (a move) or unplanned events (a fire or other disaster).
- Particularly with recovery from illness, temporary telecommuting is often combined with a part time work schedule to accommodate the needs of the employee and employer.



## Resource Materials

Additional resource material is available through a variety of sources that describe these factors in more detail. The following are examples of some of the material that is available.

- *California Telecommuting Pilot Project Final Report*, June 1990... available at Forms and Publications, Department of General Services, P.O. Box 1015, North Highlands, CA 95660
  - *Making Telecommuting Happen: A Guide for Telemanagers and Telecommuters* by Jack M. Nilles, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York. 1994. 1-800-544-0550
- *Telecommuting: A Handbook to Help You Set Up a Program at Your Company...* and *Telecommuting: A Guide for Executives...* both by Caltrans
- *Telecommuting: Moving the Work to the Workers*, published by Commuter Transportation Services, Inc. Los Angeles, 3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Los Angeles 90010 (213)380-7750
- *Telecommuting: How to Make It Work For You and Your Company*, by Gil E. Gordon and Marcia M. Kelly. c/o Gil Gordon Associates, 10 Donner Court, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852 ... (908)329-2266
- *Telecommuting Review: The Gordon Report*, published by Gil Gordon Associates. Available from Telespan Publishing Corporation, 50 West Palm Street, Altadena, CA. 91001 (818) 797-5482
- *Innovations: California's Telecommuting Pilot Project*, June 1991, The Council of State Governments, Iron works Pike, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, Kentucky 40578-1910... \$10
- *Telecommuting and Travel Demand: An Impact Assessment for State of California Telecommute Pilot Project Participants*, January 1991, available from Institute of Transportation Studies, U.C. Davis
- *California Telecommuting Pilot Project Final Report: Shared Office Space Study*, available from Caltrans, September 1989

- *The Effectiveness of Telecommuting as a Transportation Control Measure*, available from Caltrans, September 1989

## **Implementation**

### **Plan and Design for Success**

Plan and design a telecommuting program for success. The plan should include the following elements.

#### *Initiation*

- Top management endorsement and support, and identification of an agency "champion" and project coordinator who is responsible directly to top management.
- Contacts with the Department of General Services and the Telecommuting Advisory Group for guidance and support.

#### *Prototype*

- A clear statement of the goals and measurable objectives for the prototype (e.g. reductions in personnel and operating costs, improved employee effectiveness, improved supervisor/worker communications, reduced commute trips). The evaluation criteria and methods should be included.
- Orientation for all managers and prospective telecommuters followed by formal training for prototype participants (managers, supervisors and selected telecommuters).
- A detailed plan and schedule for the start up of the prototype. The plan should identify both the necessary activities and the staff responsible for completing them.
- An inventory of "before telecommuting" equipment and telecommunications costs, sick leave use, office space use (square feet), employee effectiveness and morale.
- A method for monitoring and reporting progress during the prototype period for the purpose of making corrections and adjustments to the prototype.
- Assignment of responsible staff to conduct the prototype.

### *Evaluation of the Prototype*

- Written documentation together with the prototype results and recommendations for broader application.
- Development of telecommuting policy and procedures for the department.

### **Implement the Prototype and Followup**

- Conduct orientation briefing for all employees including managers and employee union representatives. These briefing will address how telecommuting impacts employees and will serve as part of the volunteer selection process.
- Select telecommuters and supervisors using criteria developed from the guidelines and principles in this document and the business needs of the agency.
- Conduct formal training and provide reference material for selected supervisors, telecommuters, and support staff. This training is the single best

prevention strategy for avoiding pitfalls. Subject matter should include the following at a minimum:

- Identification of telecommutable work tasks
- Work hours and attendance reporting
- Security issues and resolution
- Equipment ownership, maintenance and use
- Communications and other technology needs
- Health and safety issues
- Agreement as to what constitutes successful performance of job or task
- Identification of and solutions to potential problems

- Acquire equipment and install technology as required.
- Complete telecommuter /supervisor agreements.
- Begin telecommuting.
- Monitor and evaluate the prototype, on an ongoing basis, using telecommuters' and supervisor's forums. Take corrective actions, if necessary, during the prototype.
- Conclude prototype with (1) a report with recommendations regarding expansion of the program and (2) formal written policies and procedures tailored to the agency's culture.
- Execute a full-scale followup program with following:
  - Orientation briefings.
  - A manager, supervisor and telecommuter selection process.
  - Formal training for participants--supervisors, telecommuters, selected co-workers, and support staff.
  - Flexible management philosophy and style conducive to change.
  - Forums for discussion of issues by telecommuters, supervisors, and interested others.
  - Monitoring and periodic reporting of results.

## **Program Operation**

## **Periodic Performance Review**

Supervisors should meet regularly with their telecommuters (weekly or monthly). On an ongoing basis, just as a supervisor would do with a non--telecommuting employee, work plans should be reviewed and compared to actual work completed.

## **Problem Resolution**

Telecommuting problems can be separated into two broad categories of job-related and general problems. Job-related problems arise from impediments to doing assigned work away from the central office and may include resources that are needed but were not identified earlier, lack of co-worker cooperation, or equipment needs. These problems should be handled just as they would be if the employee were not a telecommuter -- through the supervisor.

General problems include everything but job-related items. There may be transition adjustment problems in the office or at home with family and neighbors. An agency telecommuter's forum (regularly scheduled meetings) provides one way to deal with these challenges. Sharing of experiences and solutions is facilitated by regular forum meetings and direct contact with other telecommuters on an individual basis. Supervisors may also be invited to participate in these forums, to achieve a better understanding of telecommuters' needs, and to provide management assistance and guidance.

## **Renewal of Telecommuting Agreement**

Each telecommuter/supervisor agreement should be discussed and renewed annually, whenever there is a major job change (such as a promotion), or whenever the telecommuter or supervisor changes positions. Because telecommuting was selected as a feasible work option based on the combination of job characteristics, employee characteristics, and supervisor characteristics, a change in any one of these requires a review of the telecommuting arrangement.

Because this is a management work option, there is no automatic right of the telecommuter to continue telecommuting in the event of a change of supervisor.

## **Evaluation**

This section describes the issues that should be addressed during the agency's evaluation of its telecommuting program. Prior to undertaking the evaluation, a specific evaluation plan should be established, tailored to the agency's customized telecommuting program. Special attention should be given to the need to collect baseline data before telecommuting is implemented.

### **Program Effectiveness**

Program effectiveness can be difficult to measure quantitatively. The primary effect that should be assessed in evaluating the success or failure of a telecommuting situation is any change in performance. Does telecommuting affect expected performance, and in what way? The supervisor and employee must assess performance changes to determine telecommuting's effectiveness.

There are other benefits that can result from telecommuting. Some areas for agencies to evaluate include:

- Leave usage: has annual use of sick leave or overtime changed from pre-telecommuting years?
- Office space: has the need for office space been reduced? Has office shared office space been considered or implemented?
- In-office resources: are computers or other equipment more or less available to in-office staff as a result of some employees telecommuting?
- Coordination: are telecommuters generally available when needed or do co-workers waste time because of lack of access to telecommuters?
- Morale changes: Has the morale of either the telecommuters or the non-telecommuting staff changed as a result of the telecommuting program?
- Recruitment, hiring, and retention: Have recruitment and hiring opportunities improved as the result of offering the telecommuting work option? Has retention of valued employees improved?
- Affirmative action: Has the agency increased its ability to meet affirmative action goals as a result of offering telecommuting?

- Trip Reduction Program: Has the agency increased its ability to meet trip reduction goals as a result of offering telecommuting? Have peak commute trips been reduced? Have Air Quality Management District (AQMD) average vehicle ridership measures improved?
- Reduced demand for parking: has reducing the number of employees in the office reduced the demand for parking spaces?

### **Training Adequacy**

In evaluating the adequacy of the training given, look back at the training objectives. In training telecommuters, the main objectives were to learn how to establish good working relationships with the supervisor and how to set up a home office safely and effectively. Did the training program accomplish these goals? Was there a good working relationship with the supervisor? Was the home office environment as good or better for the telecommuter to work in? Were there any accidents or injuries in home offices?

One objective of training supervisors is to learn techniques of managing remote workers. Was the supervisor able to manage the telecommuter remotely, maintain good communication, monitor results and assist where needed? Have relationships between and among the worker, supervisor and peers improved, worsened or remained the same?

One goal of joint training sessions for telecommuters and their supervisors is to begin the process of establishing specific job objectives, schedules and the details of working together in telecommuting. Were all necessary topics covered in that workshop so that everyone had clear expectations? Was the transition into telecommuting fairly smooth? If not, were things missing or unclear in training that should have been included or emphasized?

### **Terms of Standard Telecommuter Agreements**

Telecommuter agreements exist to clarify expectations. Is the telecommuter agreement doing that? Did major problems or misunderstandings arise? Were these problem areas addressed in the agreement? If not, should they have been? Revision of the agreement may be desirable if the problems are significant enough.

### **Effectiveness of Work Schedules and Time Reporting**

It is essential that both the employee and the supervisor keep in mind that while telecommuting is a management work option, it is also a two-sided voluntary arrangement. This perspective will reinforce the continuing adjustments to each



situation that need to occur so that telecommuting remains a positive option to management. Periodic review of the telecommuter's work schedule is necessary. Priorities may change and assurance that the telecommuter's time is spent on the highest priority tasks needs to be confirmed.

Telecommuter's time reporting should be handled in the same way as in-office time reporting. Normal time reporting should generally be adequate. Some telecommuters and supervisors may prefer to set up schedules for telecommuting days to give themselves more structured plans so that there is no question about where the telecommuting time is going.

### **Evaluation Reporting**

Reports describing the nature of an agency's telecommuting program may be required periodically by the Department of General Services. These reports will be used to monitor the extent to which telecommuting is used throughout the state, the number of telecommuters, types of jobs, average number of days spent telecommuting, benefits and costs of the program.

# **MODEL TELECOMMUTING POLICY**

## **General**

It is the policy of the [agency] to encourage and promote the use of the telecommuting work option for home offices and telecenters. This policy recognizes the societal, management and personal benefits available through a carefully planned and managed telecommuting program.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to define the telecommuting program of the [agency] and the guidelines and rules under which it will operate.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all the telecommuting activities of the [agency]. All managers, supervisors and telecommuters should be familiar with the contents of this policy.

## **Telecommuting Policies**

Government Code sections 14200-14203 (AB 2963, enacted September 26, 1990) authorizes every state agency, including every board and commission, to incorporate telecommuting as a work option.

### **Authority**

Authority to establish a telecommuting program within the [agency] is delegated to the Director of that agency. The Department of General Services is responsible for providing technical assistance to telecommuting programs for Departments, Boards, and Commissions of the State of California. This telecommuting program should be implemented following the guidelines established by the Department of General Services.

### **Telecommuting Coordinator**

Responsibility for the day to day coordination and management of the [agency's] telecommuting program has been assigned to [name, unit]. The telecommuting coordinator will oversee the telecommuting program including compliance with policies, procedures, and guidelines. The coordinator will be the primary contact with the Department of General Services. The coordinator will represent the management of the [agency] with respect to telecommuting employees, other agencies and the public.

## **Selection**

Telecommuting is only feasible for those tasks within a job which are amenable in whole or in part to being performed away from the main office. Management of the [agency] will establish employee selection criteria and select employees. Selection of employees shall not be arbitrary nor based on seniority, but shall be based on specific, written, work related criteria established by management. Such selection criteria may include reasonable accommodation provisions for permanently disabled employees, temporarily disabled employees and displaced employees.

Employee participation in home office telecommuting is voluntary. Employee participation in telecenter telecommuting is, like other local office relocations, not necessarily voluntary.

All forms of telecommuting imply an employer-employee relationship with the employee receiving the same benefits as a non-telecommuting colleague. An independent contractor is not a candidate for telecommuting due to the required employee-employer relationship.

## **Scheduling**

Telecommuters need regular contact with supervisors and co-workers and access to specialized files and/or equipment. In addition, the supervisor must take actions to prevent the telecommuter from becoming isolated from central office staff. Therefore, home office telecommuters should spend a minimum of one day per week in the main office, except under unusual conditions.

Office needs take precedence over telecommute days. A worker must forgo telecommuting if needed in the office on the regularly scheduled telecommute day.

## **Hours of Work and Overtime**

All work schedules are discretionary and require management approval. Any work schedule (e.g. flextime, 4/10/40, etc.) may be approved for an individual telecommuter as long as the work schedule is consistent with the requirements of the employee's work week group and the provisions of the employee's collective bargaining agreement. An employee may telecommute for part of a day to avoid peak commute periods.

Overtime and call back must be authorized by management in accordance with the provisions of the employee's collective bargaining agreement and the employee's work week group.

Compensation or compensatory time off will be authorized by management in accordance with the provisions of the employee's collective bargaining agreement.

As with any work schedule, temporary telecommuting assignments or changes in work schedules may be made at management's discretion to meet management needs or to accommodate an employee's request (e.g. convalescence, parental leave, etc.).

### **Confidential and Sensitive Information**

As with all state employees, telecommuters are expected to adhere to all the rules and regulations in the State Administrative Manual, and all [agency] policies and procedures, regarding security and confidentiality for the computer, its data and information, and any other information handled in the course of work.

### **Maintenance, Repair and Replacement**

Maintenance, repair, and replacement of State owned equipment issued to telecommuters will be the responsibility of the [agency]. In the event of equipment malfunction, the telecommuter must notify his/her supervisor immediately. If repairs will take some time, the telecommuter may be asked to report to the main office until the equipment is usable.

Repairs to telecommuter owned equipment will be the responsibility of the employee.

### **Health and Safety**

Home offices must be clean and free of obstructions. The home must be in compliance with all building codes. The facility must be free of hazardous materials. Telecommuting employees are responsible for ensuring their homes comply with these health and safety requirements and for so certifying as part of their "Telecommuter's Agreement." Management may deny an employee the opportunity to telecommute or may rescind a telecommuting agreement based on safety of the home or suspected hazardous materials in the home facility. Management may also have the home office inspected for compliance with health and safety requirements. Inspections will be by appointment only.

If an employee incurs a work-related injury while telecommuting, worker's compensation law and rules apply. Employees must notify their supervisors immediately and complete all necessary and/or management requested documents regarding the injury.

## **Employee Rights**

Except as agreed to in the individual "Telecommuter's Agreement," employee rights provided for in the employee's collective bargaining agreement are not affected by participation in a telecommuting program.

None of the rights or benefits provided under the employee's collective bargaining agreement between the State and the employee unions are enhanced or abridged by the implementation of telecommuting programs. Employees retain the right to grieve in accordance with the provisions of their collective bargaining agreements.

Employees retain the right to meet with their representative (e.g. job steward) in accordance with the provisions of their collective bargaining agreements. Such meetings will take place at the employee's headquarters office and within the job steward's area of primary responsibility, not at the employee's home office. The meeting may be held at a telecenter facility within the job steward's area of primary responsibility.

## **Termination of Participation**

Management may terminate the [agency's] telecommuting program for any reason, at any time, with advance written notice to the employees. Whenever feasible such notice will be provided at least 30 calendar days prior to the termination of the program.

Because participation in telecommuting is a bilateral voluntary agreement, management may terminate an individual employee's participation in the program without cause, at any time, with advance written notice. Whenever feasible, such notice will be provided at least 30 calendar days in advance. Termination of an employee's participation *for cause* may be immediate and does *not* require advance written notice. The employee may also request to terminate participation, without cause, at any time. Management will make arrangements for the employee to begin working at the main office as quickly as possible, but no later than 30 days after notification by the employee.

## **Miscellaneous**

The opportunity to participate in a home telecommute program is offered only with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure a proper work environment is maintained (e.g. dependent care arrangements are made so as not to

interfere with the work, personal disruptions such as non-business telephone calls and visitors are kept to a minimum, etc.). Failure to maintain a proper work environment, as determined by management, provides cause for an employee's immediate termination from the agency's telecommute program.

Telecommuting opportunities are based upon program requirements as determined by management. Therefore, employees previously participating in a telecommuting assignment are not assured of a telecommuting assignment when returning from a leave of absence or after a job transfer.

### **Telecommuter's Agreement and Supervisor's Checklist**

The Supervisor's Checklist provides a way to verify that all essential parts of the start-up of a telecommuting arrangement with an employee have been covered prior to the actual start of telecommuting.

The Telecommuter's Agreement documents the mandatory policies in effect and the results of any other agreements between the supervisor and the telecommuter. This must be signed by both parties prior to the start of telecommuting and must be reviewed and renewed at least annually to ensure that the guidelines for participating in the program are well understood.

### **Renewal of Telecommuting Agreements**

Each telecommuter/supervisor agreement should be discussed and renewed annually, whenever there is a major job change (such as a promotion), or whenever the telecommuter or supervisor changes positions. Because telecommuting was selected as a feasible work option based on a combination of job characteristics, employee characteristics, and supervisor characteristics, a change in any one of these elements may require a review of the telecommuting arrangement.

Telecommuting is a work arrangement between an individual employee and his/her supervisor. The telecommuter has no automatic right to telecommute. A supervisor has no authority to require an employee to telecommute. Telecommuters and new supervisors are encouraged to continue telecommuting arrangements by mutual agreement. Neither should be required to continue a telecommuting arrangement when it is not in the best interests of either or both.

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[agency]  
**TELECOMMUTER'S AGREEMENT**

[This model telecommuter's agreement should be tailored to an individual agency's needs and included as a model in the agency's telecommuting policy.]

Both the manager and the telecommuter understand that home based telecommuting is a bilateral voluntary option and can be discontinued at either's request with no adverse repercussions.

The [agency] will pay for the following expenses:

- ☐ Charges for business related telephone calls
  - ☐ Maintenance and repairs to state owned equipment
- 

Claims will be submitted on a Travel Expense Claim along with receipt, bill or other verification of the expense.

The [agency] will not pay for the following expenses:

- ☐ Maintenance or repairs of privately owned equipment
- ☐ Utility costs associated with the use of the computer or occupation of the home
- ☐ Equipment supplies (these should be requisitioned through the main office).
- ☐ Travel expenses (other than authorized transit subsidies) associated with commuting to the central office.

Telecommute days are scheduled and will not be substituted without advance approval of the manager. In office days will be \_\_\_\_\_. Home office days will be \_\_\_\_\_.

Telecommuters must be available by phone during the core business hours of \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_

Use of sick leave, vacation, time off, or other leave credits must be approved in advance by the supervisor. Overtime to be worked must be approved in advance by the supervisor.

Telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care, and telecommuters must make regular dependent care arrangements.

The telecommuter has read and understands the agency's telecommuting policies and agree to abide by those policies.

The telecommuter to carry out the steps needed for good information security in the home-office setting, and has a copy of the agency's security requirements and procedures. The telecommuter agrees to check with her/his supervisor when security matters are at issue.

_____	_____	_____	_____
(Supervisor)	(Date)	(Telecommuter)	(Date)

This agreement expires in one year and must be renewed to continue participation in the [agency's] telecommuting program.



[agency]  
**SUPERVISOR'S CHECKLIST FOR TELECOMMUTERS**

This checklist should be tailored to an individual agency's needs and included as a model in the agency's telecommuting policy. It should also be used to ensure your telecommuting employee is properly oriented to the [agency's] program prior to telecommuting.

Name of Telecommuter \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed

- |    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | Employee has read the orientation documents and the [agency's] telecommuting policy.   | _____ |
| 2. | Employee has been provided with a schedule of core hours or guidelines for flexing work hours.   | _____ |
| 3. | Equipment issued by the [agency] is documented.  | _____ |
| 4. | Performance expectations have been discussed and are clearly understood. Assignments and due dates are documented.   | _____ |
| 5. | Requirements for adequate and safe office space at home<br>—<br>have been reviewed with the employee, and the employee certifies that those requirements have been met.                  | _____ |
| 6. | Requirements for care of equipment assigned to the employee have been discussed and are clearly understood.  | _____ |
| 7. | The employee is familiar with this agency's requirements and techniques for computer information security and has received a copy and read the agency's Information security Guidelines. | _____ |
| 8. | Phone contact procedures have been clearly defined and unit secretaries and receptionists have received training.  | _____ |
| 9. | The employee has read and signed the Telecommuter's Agreement prior to actual participation in the program.  | _____ |